

The University of Chicago

THE DISTRIBUTION OF BOOKS AND
MAGAZINES IN SELECTED
COMMUNITIES

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE
FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE LIBRARY SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF
PHILOSOPHY

1937

By
RALPH EUGENE ELLSWORTH

Private Edition, Distributed by
THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO LIBRARIES
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

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THE DISTRIBUTION OF BOOKS AND MAGAZINES IN SELECTED COMMUNITIES

How magazines and books are distributed in large urban centers is a question that should be studied for several reasons: namely, to learn what publications are supplied by each typical source, i.e. public libraries, friends, drug stores, newsstands, subscriptions, rental libraries, bookstores, and "all others"; to characterize the clientele of each source; to learn what types of publications are secured from each source by typical population groups, and to explain relationships among readers, publications and sources.

The role of each important source in the community-wide distribution of publications needs description because each source has not been described in relation to all other sources. If the public library, or any other source, monopolized the distribution of print, the lack of such description would not be serious, but no such monopoly exists. The public library distributed about 45 per cent of all books read in two large urban centers--South Chicago and in two sections of St. Louis--and less than 4 per cent of all magazines read. We do not know how far such percentages are determined by the activity of competing sources until we make the full description.

In the fall of 1933, the Social Science Research Committee and the Graduate Library School of the University of Chicago undertook a study of reading in South Chicago, in the hope that the findings could be related to previous studies of other social behavior in the same community. The following year funds were granted by the Carnegie Corporation of New York for a study of the public library in relation to municipal government, which produced comparable data on reading behavior from several other communities, including St. Louis, Missouri.

The present study is based on the community reading studies in South Chicago and St. Louis. Data were collected from 6,600 residents of South Chicago between November, 1933 and January, 1934; and from about 3,600 residents of St. Louis during

November, 1934. Each of the persons interviewed furnished information pertaining to his sex, age, education, occupation, marital status, nationality, religious affiliations, club activities, and many other items. Each person also reported the books, magazines and newspapers read during the two weeks preceding the interview, and the sources from which he secured them. The information was collected from the highly educated professional people by means of a schedule, and from all others by personal interview.

Categories

The tables containing the evidence require some account of the categories used to differentiate readers, publications, and sources. Readers' occupations are classed as follows: professionals--including doctors, lawyers, teachers, business executives, etc.; shopkeepers and salesmen--including proprietors and managers of small establishments and salespeople; skilled tradesmen--including highly skilled workers; clerks and stenographers--including private secretaries, stenographers and other people doing clerical work; students; and housewives. The four age groups are 10-19; 20-29; 30-44; 45 and over. The three classes of schooling include those with less than eight years of schooling; those who have attended high school, including those with further vocational training as in stenography or nursing; and those who have attended college plus those who have done graduate study.

The categories used to describe publications are listed with the abbreviations used in the tables as follows:

Magazines

Detec. and advent.	Detective and adventure magazines
Weekly news	Weekly news magazines, e.g. <u>Time</u> , <u>Literary Digest</u>
Motion picture	Movie, non-technical radio, love story, and true story magazines
Weekly misc.	5¢ weeklies, e.g. <u>Saturday Evening Post</u>
Medium fiction	Monthly miscellanies of second rate quality, e.g. <u>American</u> , <u>Argosy</u> , <u>Cosmopolitan</u> , <u>Red Book</u>
Religious	Religious magazines
Women's	Parent's, women's and home magazines
Other magazines	All other magazines

Books

Good fiction	Good fiction, e.g. books listed in <u>Booklist Books</u> , 1919-date (adult)
Other fiction	Other fiction books. Fiction not listed in <u>Booklist Books</u> (adult)

Juvenile	Juvenile books--fiction and non-fiction
Psychology	Psychology and philosophy
Biog. and travel	Biography and travel books
Social problems	Books dealing with social problems
Belles lettres	Belles lettres, poetry, drama, literary criticism, and other general literature books
Other books	All other books

Most of the categories are self-explanatory. Good fiction includes all classical fiction plus novels listed in the Booklist Books, 1919 to date.¹ Other fiction books cover titles not included. Since expert personal judgment was used to supplement this source, the quality of the second category is plainly below that of the first--though the distinction is not sharp. The distinction is clear enough, however, to differentiate the patrons of the various sources in terms of what they read. Finer distinctions would so greatly reduce the number of readers in each group that the percentages of publications read by each group in our sample would not be statistically reliable.

Tables I and II show the percentage of publications secured from each source. The public library supplies more books

TABLE I
BOOKS SUPPLIED BY EACH SOURCE

Sources	Communities Combined %	South Chicago %	St. Louis %
Public library .	44.7	29.1	63.9
Friends	14.9	20.4	8.1
Drug stores . .	....	....	....
Newsstands . . .	....	....	....
Rental libraries	6.8	7.3	5.5
Bookstores . . .	5.2	5.6	4.3
Subscriptions .	.9	.7	1.2
All others . . .	27.5	36.9	17.0

than any other single source, "all other sources" supply the second largest number, and "friends" supply the third largest. However, the public library in South Chicago supplies a much smaller percentage of all books read in the community than does the library in St. Louis. "All other" sources supply a much larger percentage in South Chicago than in St. Louis. Friends also sup-

¹ American Library Association, The Booklist Books; a Guide to the Best New Books, 1919 to date (Chicago: American Library Association, 1920 to date).

ply more of the books read in South Chicago than in St. Louis. Friends and "all other" sources supplement the public library in South Chicago. In St. Louis such publications are supplied by the public library.

TABLE II
MAGAZINES SUPPLIED BY EACH SOURCE

Sources	Communities Combined %	South Chicago %	St. Louis %
Public library . .	2.8	.1	5.5
Friends	12.3	19.1	4.6
Drug stores	11.1	12.8	9.1
Newsstands	12.1	12.9	9.9
Rental libraries . .	....	....	....
Bookstores . . . . .	....	....	....
Subscriptions . . .	38.7	21.3	59.1
All others	23.0	33.8	11.8

Table II Shows that the public library supplies few magazines, which are mostly obtained by subscriptions. South Chicago borrows magazines to a greater extent than St. Louis, because the St. Louis sample is wealthier. Drug stores, newsstands, rental libraries, and bookstores are used to about the same extent in both communities for magazines.

Table III presents the patronage of the sources by the various population groups in the two communities, South Chicago and St. Louis. It should be read as follows: "50.6 per cent of the people in South Chicago who secured publications from the public library were from 10 to 19 years of age."

Certain tendencies are plainly recurrent. First, all sources are used proportionally more by the groups with most schooling. Second, the college group patronizes all sources proportionally less in St. Louis than in South Chicago. Third, professionals use all agencies most, and unskilled laborers use them least. Fourth, students use "free" agencies more than do the other occupational groups.

Table IV shows the reading pattern of the various population groups for the two communities combined. It should be read as follows: "11.8 per cent of the unemployed read detective and adventure magazines; 3.5 per cent read weekly news, etc."

The facts in Table IV imply that the higher educational, occupational, and age groups tend to read more of the better mag-

TABLE III

DESCRIPTION OF THE PATRONS OF EACH AGENCY IN TERMS OF THEIR AGE, SEX,
OCCUPATION, AND EDUCATION
(Percentages)

Description	Public Library		Friends		Drug Store		Newsstand		Rental Library		Subscriptions		Bookstore	
	S.C.	St.L.	S.C.	St.L.	S.C.	St.L.	S.C.	St.L.	S.C.	St.L.	S.C.	St.L.	S.C.	St.L.
Age														
10-19	50.6	53.3	35.0	50.7	22.8	39.0	18.2	20.4	10.6	29.7	7.5	18.8	22.7	16.5
20-29	26.2	15.4	32.1	15.3	32.1	15.9	30.7	18.5	44.7	33.3	15.9	19.3	23.9	21.1
30-44	14.7	16.4	21.1	18.3	32.6	30.2	33.2	31.9	32.6	17.1	46.4	33.0	35.2	32.6
45 and over	8.2	14.7	11.7	15.9	12.3	14.9	17.6	29.0	12.1	19.8	30.1	29.0	18.2	26.8
Education														
0-8 years	49.9	12.9	59.8	18.7	49.0	23.5	42.0	27.0	14.9	13.3	32.0	25.5	56.2	16.7
High school	34.7	70.9	33.8	69.4	42.1	64.9	41.4	55.0	54.6	66.4	43.4	52.5	28.7	52.0
College	15.3	16.3	6.4	11.8	9.4	10.8	16.3	18.1	30.5	20.4	25.1	22.1	15.1	31.3
Occupation														
No data	6.0	4.2	6.4	7.0	5.1	3.4	3.8	4.8	2.8	7.1	2.1	5.6	20.2	18.3
Students	49.1	50.0	22.5	47.1	10.7	35.5	10.3	16.7	8.5	25.7	5.4	16.3	24.8	28.0
Housewives	17.4	18.5	26.2	20.7	32.7	35.5	30.7	36.3	40.4	19.5	44.9	40.9	24.8	28.0
Shopkeepers and salesmen	6.3	3.4	3.6	4.0	3.5	4.5	8.5	8.9	5.0	5.3	7.3	8.5	6.6	9.1
Professionals	3.4	7.3	4.1	4.9	5.8	3.2	7.1	7.1	9.9	4.4	16.3	7.1	11.6	16.7
Clerks and stenographers	2.2	8.7	5.1	6.4	4.8	8.1	6.1	15.2	10.6	25.7	4.5	10.4	3.1	18.3
Skilled tradesmen	3.2	6.6	6.4	8.3	12.1	7.6	14.0	9.1	12.1	9.7	10.4	9.1	14.7	7.5
Unskilled laborers	12.7	1.6	26.0	1.7	25.3	2.4	19.5	2.3	10.6	2.7	9.1	2.1	19.0	2.2
Sex														
Male	51.2	46.0	49.4	40.6	47.2	39.2	50.8	39.2	28.6	46.1	40.9	33.1	51.1	48.5
Female	48.9	54.0	50.7	58.9	52.7	60.2	49.3	60.8	71.7	54.0	59.1	65.9	48.9	51.1

TABLE IV

PER CENT OF EACH POPULATION GROUP WHICH READ EACH TYPE OF PUBLICATION

Population Group	Magazines								Books							
	Detective and Adventure	Weekly News	Motion Picture	Weekly Miscellanies	Medium Fiction	Religious	Women's	Other Magazines	Good Fiction	Other Fiction	Juvenile	Psychology	Biography and Travel	Social Problems	Belles Lettres	Other Books
Occupation																
Unemployed	11.8	3.5	7.7	14.2	8.2	2.1	18.6	11.5	5.3	10.1	7.1	1.7	6.9	3.7	5.5	2.6
Unskilled laborers	18.2	2.7	18.1	11.0	6.9	1.9	7.1	14.1	3.2	7.3	1.1	2.0	1.4	4.1	4.5	2.5
Clerks and stenographers	1.9	4.7	6.0	18.5	12.0	1.8	22.5	11.3	6.1	8.1	.5	1.1	1.0	4.8	1.0	3.8
Shopkeepers and salesmen	3.7	6.3	3.2	23.0	12.8	1.4	14.4	18.0	4.1	5.1	.4	1.5	1.0	4.1	1.0	3.8
Skilled tradesmen	5.5	6.1	3.4	21.0	10.5	2.3	11.9	18.7	4.2	66.9	.6	1.8	1.7	5.5	4.6	5.2
Housewives	1.6	3.8	9.5	14.8	11.8	3.4	32.1	8.4	4.2	4.7	.2	1.4	1.7	4.5	1.8	3.7
Students	6.9	3.1	6.0	11.0	5.9	3.3	11.2	17.1	8.3	13.6	9.1	4.8	1.9	4.4	4.4	3.1
Professionals	1.1	6.3	.8	14.9	9.2	2.0	14.0	26.3	5.7	3.3	.1	3.0	2.3	1.3	1.1	8.1
Education																
0-8 years	9.4	2.7	13.5	11.8	7.5	3.0	17.4	11.7	3.6	6.4	5.1	1.8	9	2	4	4.5
High school	4.2	4.2	5.4	16.0	10.8	1.5	20.1	14.2	6.3	10.2	1.2	9	1.3	.4	5.2	6
College	1.2	6.6	1.6	16.8	10.9	1.4	19.7	20.0	6.4	4.0	.3	2.3	2.1	8	1.1	5.0
Age																
10-19	8.7	2.7	10.1	10.8	5.8	.5	10.8	15.4	7.5	13.1	7.9	.3	1.7	.3	.8	3.6
20-29	7.3	3.6	11.9	15.4	10.0	.6	17.3	11.6	5.6	8.6	.6	1.2	1.4	.4	.6	4.2
30-44	4.0	4.7	5.7	17.2	11.2	2.5	22.4	14.6	4.9	4.9	.4	2.0	1.1	.5	.5	3.9
45 and over	2.1	5.6	3.0	16.1	11.5	4.7	26.6	15.2	3.6	3.5	.2	2.6	1.0	.3	.6	3.4
Sex																
Males	11.1	4.5	3.9	16.5	8.8	1.6	7.2	21.9	4.4	7.6	2.5	1.4	1.5	.6	.6	5.7
Females	1.8	3.5	11.0	13.3	10.1	2.3	27.6	8.6	6.0	7.6	2.4	1.5	1.0	.2	.9	2.3

azines and books. While this statement is too obvious to be news, it has not been so clearly substantiated before, and it supplies a useful basis for predicting the types of publications preferred by a given sex, age, schooling, and occupational status.

Table V shows the types of publications distributed by each source and should be read as follows: "Of all persons reporting use of the public library in South Chicago, .7 per cent secured detective and adventure magazines." The unit of measurement is the number of readers, not number of publications read.

Tables III, IV and V, when considered separately, present the three elements in a reading situation, the reader, the publication read, and the source supplying the publication. When considered together they give a picture of reading behavior, within the limits of supply and demand.

The accessibility of each source has been shown to affect the size of its patronage.² The nature of its patronage is determined by the reading demands of each group, and the supply of the publications demanded. The demand and supply combined determine the publications obtained by each group. Hence, to describe publications secured by each sex, age, educational, and occupational group from each agency should suggest the relative importance of supply and demand³ upon reading behavior. To clarify this distinction is a problem of major importance for all distributors of print.

The distribution of print in South Chicago and St. Louis as described supports the following generalizations: (1) the groups differ in the types of publications they secure from all sources; (2) the sources differ in the types of publications they hold; and (3) the sources differ in the kinds of people they attract. Each of these statements provokes the question Why? Each invites a discussion, if not an answer, in terms of the relative influence of supply and demand upon differences in group selec-

²Ralph E. Ellsworth, "The Distribution of Books and Magazines in Selected Communities" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Graduate Library School, University of Chicago, 1937), chap. iii.

³The distinctions between supply and demand acceptable to current economic theory conflict with the distinction here made. See E. J. Working, "Demand," Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, ed. Edwin R. A. Seligman, Vol. V (1931), for a definition by J. S. Mill which supports the interpretation here made.

TABLE V
TYPES OF PUBLICATIONS DISTRIBUTED BY EACH SOURCE

Types of Publications	Public Libraries		Friends		Drug Stores		Newsstands	
	S.C.	St.L.	S.C.	St.L.	S.C.	St.L.	S.C.	St.L.
<u>Magazines</u>								
Detec. and advent.	.7	....	19.1	2.3	18.9	5.2	14.7	3.2
Weekly news . . .	....	1.8	1.5	1.9	2.9	3.2	4.0	5.7
Motion picture . .	.9	.4	20.8	4.0	24.2	13.5	19.3	8.6
Weekly misc. . . .	.1	1.4	6.5	8.1	18.5	30.6	23.2	29.7
Medium fiction . .	.1	3.0	5.8	6.8	8.7	13.0	8.9	14.9
Religious	.1	....	.4	.5	.2	....	.2	.1
Women's	.4	3.5	8.3	10.8	16.1	20.0	15.7	22.0
Other magazines .	1.3	13.8	11.7	8.0	10.4	14.3	14.0	15.9
<u>Books</u>								
Good fiction . . .	23.1	18.4	5.9	39.1	....	....	....	....
Other fiction . . .	32.0	33.7	9.3	9.2	....	....	....	....
Juvenile	16.4	2.4	3.6	1.7	....	....	....	....
Psychology	3.0	2.7	1.1	.5	....	....	....	....
Biog. and travel .	5.2	4.5	1.4	1.2	....	....	....	....
Social problems .	.8	1.8	....	1.2	....	....	....	....
Belles lettres . .	1.7	1.8	.4	2.1	....	....	....	....
Other books . . .	14.2	10.8	4.2	2.6	....	....	....	....

Types of Publications	Rental Libraries		Bookstores		Subscriptions		All Others	
	S.C.	St.L.	S.C.	St.L.	S.C.	St.L.	S.C.	St.L.
<u>Magazines</u>								
Detec. and advent.	....	....	....	....	.8	.3	6.6	1.1
Weekly news . . .	....	....	....	....	6.0	10.2	1.1	9.7
Motion picture . .	....	....	....	....	1.5	....	10.2	3.4
Weekly misc. . . .	....	....	....	....	10.2	23.6	18.9	22.5
Medium fiction . .	....	....	....	....	10.8	22.1	8.3	9.0
Religious . . . .	....	....	....	....	12.6	5.2	2.7	1.7
Women's . . . . .	....	....	....	....	28.2	17.2	14.1	21.0
Other magazines .	....	....	....	....	29.9	21.3	13.6	10.8
<u>Books</u>								
Good fiction . . .	49.6	20.4	18.6	25.0	....	....	4.8	4.1
Other fiction . . .	34.8	68.1	21.3	23.5	....	....	4.0	6.4
Juvenile	1.4	....	14.4	5.0	....	....	4.9	.4
Psychology	3.5	.9	8.7	12.0	....	....	3.2	2.7
Biog. and travel .	6.4	.9	6.8	5.0	....	....	1.6	.6
Social problems .	.7	.9	.8	3.5	....	....	.3	.3
Belles lettres . .	1.4	2.7	1.9	3.5	....	....	.9	.9
Other books . . .	2.1	6.2	27.4	22.5	....	....	4.8	5.3

tion, differences in titles carried by each source, and differences in clienteles of each source. One useful basis for such discussion is found in reading motives. Whenever reading motives can be clearly differentiated, they serve well to relate differences among publications to differences among readers. Such relationships as appear will indicate the influence of group demand as distinct from local supply.

The distinction between supply and demand is essential to correct interpretation of our data. Yet one hesitates to use terms to which academic discussion has attached the variety of precise meanings which economists have attached to supply and demand. We do so simply because no better terms have been found to explain the relation between activities by distributors and activities by readers. When speaking of readers alone, we may use the terms extrinsic and intrinsic to distinguish motives prompted by advertising and availability from the motives of individual preference. But these terms alone make no provision for the differences in supply which may or may not relate to differences in reading behavior. Since definitions of supply and demand in this sense have been made elsewhere,⁴ the terms are here used in their colloquial sense.

Not all the reading motives which one might list help to distinguish the effects of supply and demand on different readers, publications and sources. The following are perhaps a fair compromise between definiteness and scope: to follow the news; to secure evidence or to solve problems; to experience thrills; and to enjoy the literary arts.

To Follow the News

Reading "to follow the news" suggests publications of three types: the press, news magazines, and journals of opinion or current events. Most people read newspapers. In addition to inspecting head lines and comics, some read news items--sensational and otherwise. In South Chicago about 90 per cent of the people interviewed read newspapers.⁵ Of these, about one-seventh read

⁴Douglas Waples, People and Print: Some Social Aspects of Reading since 1929, Social Science Research Council, 1937.

⁵Ethel M. Fair, "Public Library versus Other Sources of Books" (Unpublished Master's dissertation, Graduate Library School, University of Chicago, 1935), p. 8.

news items along with some other part of the paper, while only about one-thirteenth read news items alone (see Table VI).

TABLE VI
NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN SOUTH CHICAGO SAMPLE
WHO READ NEWS ITEMS, EDITORIALS
AND COLUMNISTS IN NEWSPAPERS

News and some other part	1,018
News alone	618
Editorial and some other part	215
Editorial alone	27
Columnists and some other part	52
Columnists alone	11

The factors of supply are plainly more important than factors of demand in explaining why more people follow the news in the press than in other publications. Due vigilance on a park bench will secure a paper when one lacks the two cents to buy one. People acquire the habit of reading newspapers from the time they are first able to follow the comic strips and the habit is kept alive by the inescapable supply. One takes the daily paper for granted in most American homes.

"Following the news" may vary from reading a highly sensational account of the activities of the latest "sex moron" to reading foreign dispatches and objectively written articles on important local and national issues. Readers of the latter may not be the same people who read the former. In America at least, the newspaper is read by people who have many other motives than to follow the news. Only one-seventh of the South Chicago sample which read the press read the news items at all. The others read comic strips, pictures, short stories and complete novels, recipes, cross-word puzzles, advertisements, motion-picture reviews, sports, market quotations, and much else. Many who might otherwise read books and magazines find all they want in the daily paper. Journalists have already predicted that the more popular novels and non-fiction books will all appear in the press.

The people who read newsmagazines like the Literary Digest, Time, Midweek Pictorial, and Pathfinder but who may or may not read news items in the press are relatively few (about 337 in the South Chicago and 455 in the St. Louis samples), and are found chiefly among the better educated groups. The supply of such magazines is more limited than the supply of newspapers. They are more expensive, appear less frequently and offer a smaller range

of features than the press. They are more widely read by the better educated groups in the higher occupational strata. Hence group demand appears more plainly in the reading of newsmagazines than in the reading of newspapers.

Most of the newsstands and drug stores carrying pulp magazines also carry news magazines at about the same price. But those who read the news magazines most do not read the pulp magazines most. Since both types of magazines are equally available and are read by different groups, the difference in demand is evident. News magazines are not read like newspapers because of the inescapable supply of the latter.

People who wish to go beyond the press to more critical evaluations of current events, e.g. The Survey and Survey Graphic, Forum, Nation, Yale Review, are even fewer (90 in South Chicago and 115 in the St. Louis samples). They are the more intelligent and the best educated. Group demand rather than relative supply explains the reading of such magazines, because their readers can well afford to buy what they like and are least affected by inaccessibility. But public libraries subscribe to magazines of this type. They are available to people who cannot afford to buy them. Non-readers of such magazines neglect them partly for lack of access, because a Yale Review on one's desk is worth several in the public library, but mostly for lack of interest or for lack of the necessary reading skills. This fact relates to the generalization that groups differ in the types of publications they secure from all sources--that is, the effects of availability on reading behavior are limited by differences in group demand. Club subscription rates, wider advertising, and more convenient service will increase the number of readers somewhat; but the number appears to be limited to the number of people with at least a high school education, and with a lively interest in the social and economic problems confronting them.

To Solve Problems

People turn to print for information because information is more efficiently located in print than elsewhere. Facts are sought to answer an infinite variety of questions, but the motive and the procedures are similar. The demand is usually specific, though it ranges from "how many teeth in a whale?" to what does Margaret Mitchell say about the Yankee raid on Atlanta. The sup-

pl:--including publications, personnel and bibliographic apparatus--will partly determine how easily the desired fact can be found. People whose demands are such that they can be met only by specific publications are more dependent on supply than are those whose demands can be met by several kinds of books. A high-school student who wants to know where Abyssinia is can be supplied by almost any encyclopedia, atlas, almanac, or old history text book. But a city health official wanting to know how the Supreme Court of Mississippi decided a certain case in 1899 will probably need a special law library.

People seeking facts are found in all occupational groups. Adults with little or no training are at a considerable disadvantage in attempting to use a reference collection in a public library. If we may assume that the people seeking information are those reading non-fiction books, then we may say that in South Chicago and St. Louis they are the people who have had at least a high-school education and who are engaged in the more highly skilled occupations.

The publications used to answer questions are generally non-fiction books and periodicals. Since public libraries and special libraries are maintained to supply information, and since their equipment--i.e. publications, personnel, and bibliographic apparatus--have been selected for the purpose, such libraries are the best sources. Home libraries and "friends" may or may not be satisfactory sources, depending on what such collections possess and what questions must be answered. Commercial agencies such as newsstands and rental libraries are the least satisfactory because they exist for other purposes.

Reading motivated by a desire for information relates to the generalization that different groups read different types of publications. It is evident that groups which differ in occupation differ somewhat in the types of facts they seek. Differences in reading motivated by the desire for facts are best explained by group demand. Relative supply enters in to the extent that the availability of certain sorts of information creates a demand for it. Public libraries which carry copies of Moody's and Best's investment guides, for example, will very likely create a demand for those publications among people who have money to invest.

To Enjoy Thrills

People who read for thrills generally like their thrills straight. They like stories of sex, of "love," of motion-picture stars, of wild adventure unhampered by probabilities. They are found mostly among young people of little education and of low economic and social status (see Table IV). The publications are supplied by the commercial agencies and friends, and are closely confined to the types of publications named. Men read more detective and adventure than do women, while women read more motion picture and love stories than do men. Within these limits, the relative supply obviously determines what will be read to a greater extent than does the group demand. There are dozens of similar titles within each type.

Accessibility of other types of publications seems to have little influence on the readers in search of thrills. They commonly lack the reading ability to understand more complicated writing. Many have probably never depended on print for any other kind of satisfaction. They predominate in occupations which make heavy demands on their physical energies, e.g. unskilled laborers, and are too tired after work for "heavy" reading. Also, because of their occupation and income level, they are thrown with those who prefer reading substitutes, like conversation, to any reading that demands mental effort.

Since reading "thrill" magazines constitutes a large share of the reading done in South Chicago and St. Louis, the above facts go far to explain the use which certain groups make of the sources. Thrill readers patronize the sources that supply the thrills. Poorly educated people in the lowest occupational strata use drug-store magazine stands more than do well educated people in the higher occupations. Also, the public library carries almost no such material. Commercial agencies carry pulp magazines and cheap fiction in large quantities. People who want them rely heavily on drug stores, newsstands, and "friends," and forego the public library.

To Enjoy the Literary Arts

People who read for the pleasure they find in the artistry of fine writing are few in number and are found among the better educated. They generally know what they want among the classics and better known contemporary writers. They often pay little

attention to new and unknown writers. But some devotees of find literature take pride in discovering new artists. In such pursuits, they will be much influenced by supply. If they read the book-review sections of newspapers and magazines they will be influenced by advertising. If they browse in bookstores, rental libraries, and public libraries, they will be influenced by the personnel, by the physical facilities and stock of new publications. Finally, their contacts with friends also affect their selections. Supply thus is an important factor in determining what such people will read.

Well educated people in the higher occupational strata largely monopolize this motive. Since they are few in number in most communities--especially in South Chicago--most rental libraries and smaller bookstores cannot afford to stock the publications they will read or the expert personnel necessary to talk with them on their own level. The public library, not concerned with making a profit, can--unless the local pressure for cheap fiction is too great--stock high quality fiction, poetry, drama and essays. Its personnel is trained to know good literature. Thus the sources will differ in their relative appeal to such readers in the degree to which they carry good modern fiction.

People of wealth tend to patronize bookstores, rental libraries, or subscription clubs which supply desired titles more conveniently than the public library. Others rely on the public library or friends for such literature unless they have access to the larger rental libraries.

The preceding discussion suggests various patterns of supply and demand; various combinations which together determine what people inspired by similar motives will read and what sources they will use. Supply has considerable effect upon the relative emphasis of motives and also, of course, upon the degree to which different motives can be satisfied in any one community. Hence the study suggests that the more we know about factors which make for differences in relative supply, the better we may be able to control them in the interest of general social welfare--assuming, of course, that there is more social value in the reading of some publications than of others.

The study emphasizes the reciprocal relation of relative supply and group demand. Communities ranking high in terms of economic and sociological indexes maintain more varied sources of

print. Wilson, in his study of the distribution of reading facilities in the United States,⁶ shows that states and regions which rank high in terms of wealth, educational facilities and communication facilities, also rank high in library holdings and circulation, in number of bookstores, rental libraries, and in magazine subscriptions. Purdy, in his study of the library facilities of seven midwestern states,⁷ found that there is a fairly high correlation among the above factors on the basis of counties. The Role of the Urban Community in the National Economy,⁸ a forthcoming report by the Research Committee on Urbanization to the National Resources Committee, shows that similar differences exist among cities of comparable size in the various regions of the country. Miller, in his study of the relation of reading characteristics to social indexes⁹ in the six census tracts of South Chicago, found that the tracts which rank highest in social traits also rank highest in terms of the number of more "reputable" publications supplied and read.

This study takes the analysis one step further. It demonstrates that the availability of publications in typical sources affects the expression of reading motives and thus has large influence upon the reading done by the constituent social groups.

Since the supply of print in a community is determined so largely by its wealth, it would seem that little can be done to increase the supply in poor communities like South Chicago. But this position assumes that the present system of distribution is the best possible one. This study shows that the present system is uneconomical at many points. For example, it shows that the public library supplies many "poor" fiction books--publications which can be easily and cheaply secured from rental libraries or bookstores. The money thus spent by the library cannot be used

⁶L. R. Wilson, The Geography of Reading in the United States (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1937).

⁷George Flint Purdy, "Public Library Service in the Middle West" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Graduate Library School, University of Chicago, 1936).

⁸"Communication and Cultural Agencies," The Role of the Urban Community in the National Economy, A Report of the Research Committee on Urbanization to the National Resources Board (Chicago, 1937). (Mimeographed.)

⁹Robert Alexander Miller, "The Relation of Reading Characteristics to Social Indexes," The American Journal of Sociology, XLI (May 1935), 738-56.

for publications which are expensive and which cannot be secured at a low cost from other sources--that is, publications which furnish specialized information, and publications of greater literary merit.

Librarians have generally justified the presence of light current fiction on the grounds that those who read such publications will develop a taste for the better publications in the library. No doubt some of them do. But our data show that each group has a total and somewhat distinctive reading pattern (see Table IV), and that what each group secures from each source is consistent with the total pattern regardless of what else is there. People who are able and interested in reading many kinds of publications may be much influenced by sources, but those confined to simply written fiction can hardly be induced by mere availability to read beyond it. Readers of the most mature types of literature do not, as a group, read light fiction in large quantities; yet such "determinism" should not be pushed too far.

The editors of The National Forum said recently: "Before 95 per cent of the people come to the age of interest in the issues of social living, their formal education stops." Of the 75,300,000 adults in the population only 12.2 per cent have graduated from high school and only 3 per cent from college.¹⁰ Thus it would seem that the library's efforts to induce habitual readers of light current fiction to read better novels and non-fiction books will be ineffective without some means of increasing the ability and desire of such people to read. Since the library has neither the staff nor the facilities to undertake adult education systematically, it would seem that its best contribution to the cultural life of the community is made through devoting its facilities to those population groups who already have the ability and desire to read worthwhile publications. The formal educational institutions, rather than the library, are charged with the responsibility of enlarging those groups. Doubtless something can be done by increasing the availability and simplicity of good books, but how much remains to be seen.

Because the people who would profit most by an increased supply are those who prefer to read the better literature, it

¹⁰ From a leaflet, The National Forum, published by the National Forum, A Non-Partisan Movement for Social Education (Chicago [1936]).

would seem that a better economy of distribution within communities is a goal worth seeking. The reading motives discussed in the chapter suggest that those who read for information or to enjoy good literature are less well supplied in St. Louis and South Chicago than are those who read for thrills and news. We may assume that the public library can most appropriately supply the publications and personnel needed to provide reference service and good literature. If so, we may ask whether the library is rendering services that are more acceptably and more efficiently rendered by other agencies. To relinquish such services to the other agencies would permit the public library to function more efficiently as a center of reference, information, and "healthful and intelligent" recreation. This, after all, is the public library's main business and our evidence has shown the need to be real.

We have noted that half of those who use the public library branches are students. This raises the old question whether the school or the public library should provide for students. We cannot decide the question, but we can point out that over half of the students using the public library read fiction, and more read poor than read good fiction.¹¹ Only about 15 per cent of the students read non-fiction books. If the library caters to students in the hope that the reading habits they develop will continue through life, the hope may well prove barren.

For a better economy of distribution we have to know considerably more about the aspects of supply and demand which have just been noticed. In conclusion, we may mention a few specific problems and indicate relevant data.

First, the relation of one agency to the others should be clarified by the governmental, economic, and sociological conditions that explain its origins, present status, and values to the community. For example, can the rapid increase in the number of rental libraries since 1931¹² be explained by the inability of the public library to provide sufficient copies of current popular fiction to meet the demands? Can the comparative scarcity of bookstores west of the Alleghenies¹³ be explained by a general lack of interest in owning books, by the rapid growth of public

¹¹Ellsworth, op. cit., Table XXXI, p. 55.

¹²Waples, op. cit.

¹³Wilson, op. cit.

libraries, or by the failure of the book trades to adjust to the prevailing economy of the Middle West?

To trace the evolution of distributing agencies we need historical studies which are not "antiquarian" in emphasis, but which, like Wellard's Book Selection,¹⁴ place the agency in its social and cultural settings. The data useful for such studies will include literature of the social and economic history of the United States; histories and records of publishing firms and book-stores; records of the meetings of local library boards; records of local clubs and organizations which have generally interested themselves in libraries; and records of special organizations which have established libraries for their own members. Such studies should add to our understanding of how changes in the policies and activities of each distributing agency have affected other agencies; how changes in the political, economic and social life of communities have affected agencies; and now the agencies in turn have affected the intellectual life of different groups in the social order.

Second, to what extent is the distributing process a function of size and type of community? Do people in wealthy communities secure a larger proportion of their publications from book stores and subscription clubs than do people in communities like South Chicago? Or does the use of the public library increase proportionally also? Do residents of small communities (from 500 to 5,000 population) rely more heavily on magazine reading than do people living in large communities? If so, what types of magazines do they read? Does the lack of library facilities in small communities lower the level of reading?

Some of the data needed to meet such questions can be secured from studies already in print, and some require primary studies. The question, Who reads what, and where does he get it? for communities of different sizes and types, requires a series of community analyses like those herein reported. But other useful evidence can be found in studies like The Role of the Urban Community in the National Economy,¹⁵ which analyzes most available library statistics such as percentage of population served, number of volumes in libraries, library circulation, and expenditures

¹⁴James H. Wellard, Book Selection (London: Grafton and Company, 1937).

¹⁵Op. cit.

for cities of different sizes in different regions of the United States. It does the same for other communication and recreational agencies such as bookstores, rental libraries, motion-picture theaters, dance halls, newspaper and magazine subscriptions. Since the data are grouped by size of community, they cover several aspects of our problem. They do not, unfortunately, tell us who uses each agency, nor what kinds of publications each distributes.

Third, since the types of publications which different groups secure from each source can be accounted for, in part, by differences in reading motives among the groups, social changes which affect the status, attitudes and general well-being of various groups in the population are directly involved in the larger problem. Here the student of reading has a wealth of literature from which he may draw hypotheses for investigation. To mention only a few of the more recent studies, The Role of the Urban Community in the National Economy¹⁶ deals with many of the underlying factors causing changes in the growth and functioning of cities of various sizes. The various monographs in Recent Social Trends; Brunner and Lorge's study of the effects of the depression on rural areas;¹⁷ and several of the Research Memoranda studies on the social aspects of the depression sponsored by the Social Science Research Council such as Dwight Sanderson, Rural Life; Jesse B. Sears, Primary and Secondary Education; Jesse F. Steiner, Recreation and Leisure Time; Douglas Waples, People and Print; Samuel C. Kincheloe, Religion; S. A. Stouffer and Paul Lazarsfeld, Family; all deal with changes in American life which affect both the reading behavior of the people and the sources which supply print.

Because reading is only one of the many media of communication and recreation, students of reading distribution may well look to the findings and techniques of social anthropology¹⁸ which interpret social behavior by observing all activities of the individual in his social relationships.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Edmund de Schweinitz Brunner and Irving Lorge, Rural Trends in Depression Years; a Survey of Village-Centered Agricultural Communities (New York: Columbia University Press, 1937).

¹⁸For example, see the studies of a New England Community and of a community in the Deep South directed by W. Lloyd Warner, to be published in 1937.

Fourth, a comparative study of the distribution methods of other countries should bear both on the relation of public libraries to commercial agencies, and on the problem of attracting larger clientele to all sources. Studies of the relations between public libraries and commercial agencies in countries with widely different forms of government like England, Germany, Denmark, France, Russia, and Italy should contribute to the first problem. The services offered by scholarly libraries, "circulating" libraries and other commercial agencies in European countries should contribute to the second.

